DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 290 557 PS 017 104

AUTHOR Denham, Susanne A.
TITLE Child Competence and Maternal Emotion Socialization Correlates of Attachment Q-Sort Variables.
PUB DATE Aug 87
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Psychological Association (New York, NY, August 28-September 1, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Affective Behavior; *Attachment Behavior; Coping; Emotional Experience; Interpersonal Competence; Mothers; Parent Influence; *Preschool Children; Prosocial Behavior; *Q Methodology; Research Methodology; Security (Psychology); *Validity
IDENTIFIERS Dependency (Personality)

ABSTRACT

To validate a new approach to research on the attachment behavior of children beyond toddler age, this study investigated relations between Q-sort outcomes and preschool children's affective perspective-taking; prosocial responsiveness to emotion; social competence, as rated by their teachers; and their mothers' expression and handling of emotions. Subjects were 18 children between 31 and 54 months of age and their mothers. Multiple measures were employed, including: (1) a puppet measure assessing children's affective perspective taking; (2) observation of children's prosocial reactions to emotions of peers; (3) peer sociometric ratings; (4) teacher's ratings of children's social competence on a behavior Q-sort and a problem behavior questionnaire; (5) diary records of maternal emotional displays; (6) semi-structured interviews focused on maternal emotional coping methods; and (7) mothers' trained observation of children's behavior and subsequent completion of Waters and Deane's (1985) Attachment Q-sort. Scores were correlated with 36-month criterion sorts delineating the constructs of security of attachment, dependency, and sociability. Findings reinforced the organizational view of attachment and the validity of the measurement technique, suggesting that attachment Q-sort criterion scores are related to social-emotional competence and certain aspects of maternal emotional socialization. (RH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED290557

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Child Competence and Maternal Emotion Socialization Correlates of Attachment Q-Sort Variables

Susanne A. Denham

George Mason University

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Susanne A. Denham
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

PS 017104

Poster presented at the annual meetings of the American Psychological Association, August, 1987, New York, New York.

Abstract

The attachment Q-sort delineates the constructs of security of attachment, sociability, and dependency. This study proposes to elucidate relations these scales four pertinent sorts of variables: (1) affective perspective-taking; (2) observed prosocial responsiveness to emotion; (3) teachers' ratings of preschoolers' social competence; and (4) mothers' expression of and handling of emotions. Subjects were 18 children aged 31-54 months, and their mothers. The pattern of correlations suggests that attachment q-sort criterion scores are indeed related to social-emotional competence and certain aspects of maternal emotion socialization, reinforcing the organizational view of attachment and the validity of the instrument.

Child Competence and Maternal Emotion Socialization Correlates of Attachment Q-Sort Variables

A recent trend in attachment research has been the development of measurement techniques to investigate quality of parent-child affect relationship and their correlates beyond toddlerhood, the age range where Ainsworth's Strange Situation (Ainsworth & Wittig, 1969) is well validated (Waters & Deane, 1985; Main et al., 1985). One of these new measures weds observational and Q-sort methodologies (see also Waters et al., 1983) to delineate the constructs of security of attachment, sociability, and dependency in 12- to 36-months-olds.

Given the newness of the above technique, validational studies are called for. Thus this study proposes to elucidate relations between scales derived from this Q-sort and four pertinent sorts of variables: (1) affective perspective-taking; (2) observed prosocial responsiveness to emotion; (3) teachers' ratings of preschoolers' social competence; and (4) mothers' expression of and handling of emotions. Examination of these relations could simultaneously provide much-needed validation for the measurement technique, and, even more importantly, substantiate the importance of adaptive parent child relationship with respect to other areas of child competence, according to the perspective of attachment as an organizational constuct (Sroufe & Waters, 1977).

Method

Subjects were 18 children aged 31-54 months and their mothers. Measures were as follows: (1) Children:

(a) Understanding of emotions was tested via a puppet measure,

which assessed children's ability to take the affective perspective of the puppet, who felt happy, sad, angry, or afraid in situations where mothers had reported children would feel differently; (b) prosocial reactions to peer emotions (matching, helping, etc.) were measured observationally in the preschool classroom. (c) Peer sociometric ratings were gathered using Asher et al's picture technique. Scores included an aggregate of the number of times chosen as liked, disliked, or "kinda liked" (neutral) by peers. Test-retest correlation = .46, $p < .01$.

These measures were administered and completed by different persons, thus assuring independence.

(2) Teachers rated the children's social competence via the Baumrind Preschool Behavior Q-Sort and Behar Problem Behavior Questionnaire (PBQ; total score).

(3) Mothers: (a) Maternal emotional displays were coded from emotion diaries which mothers were trained to maintain (Crockenberg, 1985; Zahn-Waxler et al., 1979); (b) A semi-structured interview yielded information on maternal emotional coping methods.

(c) Waters and Deane's Attachment Q-sort: Mothers were trained to observe their children over a 5-day period for pertinent behaviors and to then make their sort. From these sorts, each subject's correlation with 36-month criterion sorts for attachment security, dependency, and sociability were recorded. An aggregate was formed as follows (Cronbach's alpha = .70):

Aggregate = Attachment security + Sociability - Dependency

Results and Discussion

Given the small sample size and resultant low power, the $p < .15$ level of significance is reported below. Table 1 displays pertinent correlations.

Specifically, children whose criterion correlations for sociability were higher also tended to be more prosocial in response to peers' emotions. Children who were described as more competent on the Q-Sort were more adept at taking the affective perspective of others and tended to have higher sociometric aggregate scores. Children with higher dependency criterion correlations on the Q-sort tended to be rated as more cooperative and tractable by teachers (perhaps because of being near teachers a great deal, and wanting to please), and displayed fewer acting-out behavior problems in the preschool.

Mothers who reported a greater incidence of anger and tension on the emotion diary had more dependent children. Those who reported apologizing after tension and anger had less competent children. Perhaps mothers who apologize are more caught up in tension and anger and also more guilty; further, apologies to children at this early age may not be adaptive, whereas they may be so with older children who can understand the reasoning behind apology.

The pattern of correlations suggests that attachment q-sort criterion scores are indeed related to social-emotional competence and certain aspects of maternal emotion socialization, reinforcing the organizational view of attachment and the validity of the instrument. Further study with larger sample sizes is warranted, and will be carried out by this researcher.

Table 1

Correlations of Attachment Q-Sort Variables with Child Competence and Maternal Emotion Socialization Variables

Child and Maternal Measures	Q-Sort Scales: Attachment Security	Dependency	Sociability	Aggregate
Prosocial Behavior	.26	-.18	.38 +	.36 +
Reinforcing Others' Emotions	.21	-.41 ++	.23	.36 +
Sociometric Aggregate'	.26	-.38 +	.15	.33
Affective Perspective Taking	.38 +	-.46 *	.38 +	.48 *
Purposive [a]	.40 ++	-.13	.49 *	.43 ++
Cooperative	.02	.36 +	-.20	-.24
Tractable	-.05	.46 *	-.14	-.28
PBQ Total	-.06	-.46 *	.10	.23
Apology for Negative Emotions [b]	-.75 *	.21	-.53 *	-.56 *
Maternal Anger +Tension [b]	-.08	.39 +	.02	-.18

+ $p < .15$. ++ $p < .10$. * $p < .05$.
a Baumrind scale. b Maternal diary or interview variable.

REFERENCES

Ainsworth, M. D. S., & Wittig, B. A. (1969). Attachment and exploratory behavior of one-year-olds in a strange situation. In B. M. Foss (Ed.), Determinants of infant behavior IV (pp. 111-136). London: Methuen.

Crockenberg, S. (1985). Toddlers' reactions to maternal anger. Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, 31, 361-373.

Main, M., Kaplan, N., & Cassidy, J. (1985). Security in infancy, childhood, and adulthood: A move to the level of representation. In I. Bretherton & E. Waters (Eds.), Growing points in attachment: Theory and research (pp. 66-106). Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, Serial No. 209, 50, 1-2.

Sroufe, L. A., & Waters, E. (1977). Attachment as an organizational construct. Child Development, 48, 1184-1199.

Waters, E., & Deane, K. (1985). Defining and assessing individual differences in attachment relationships: Q-methodology and the organization of behavior in infancy and early childhood. In I. Bretherton & E. Waters (Eds.), Growing points in attachment: Theory and research (pp. 41-65). Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development, Serial No. 209, 50, 1-2.

Waters, E., & Sroufe, L. A. (1983). Social competence as a developmental construct. Developmental Review, 3, 79-97.

Zahn-Waxler, C., Radke-Yarrow, M., & King, R. A. (1979). Child rearing and children's prosocial initiations toward victims of distress. Child Development, 50, 319-330.